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SUBJECT: CANADA AND HAITI

¶1. (U) Summary. Haiti, even before the recent earthquake, was a major foreign policy priority for Canada. Haiti is Canada's second largest recipient of humanitarian assistance worldwide, with a number of Canadian federal and provincial agencies as well as private sector institutions active in the country. Trade and investment levels were at modest levels, however. Canada has been an important contributor to MINUSTAH, and will remain an key partner on the future of Haiti. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Since coming into office in February 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has put Haiti as one of his government's top foreign policy priorities, most notably beginning with a February 2007 policy address describing an increased focus on Haiti and Latin America, followed by a visit that year by PM Harper. As the only two major francophone countries in the Western Hemisphere, Canada and Haiti have long had special bonds. Over 100,000 Haitians now live in Canada, with the greatest concentration in Montreal, Quebec. Although these Haitian-Canadians are far more likely to vote for the opposition Liberal Party or the Bloc Quebecois, the ruling Conservative Party has for years been patiently courting these voters, as well as other immigrant groups.

¶3. (U) Canadian Governor General Michaëlle Jean is Haitian-born and did not even come to Canada until she was in her teens. In addition to visits to Haiti and welcoming the Haitian Prime Minister to Ottawa in December 2009, she has been highly visible in Canada's reaction to the recent earthquake. The government - unusually - included her in the Prime Minister's first post-earthquake meeting with the Haitian Charge d'Affaires in Ottawa, which was - also unusually - televised live. The government then - again, unusually -- allowed the Governor General to speak to the nation directly about Haiti, during which she underscored her own personal concern for Haitians, urged Canadians to give generously to earthquake relief, and expressed appreciation (seemingly, on behalf of Haitians everywhere) for Canadian humanitarian assistance to Haiti in the wake of the latest disaster in Haiti.

¶4. (U) Long before Canada's robust response to the earthquake (the following links provide specifics on Canada's humanitarian and financial contributions:
<http://www.comfec-cefcom.forces.gc.ca/pa-ap/ops/fs-fr/dart-eicc-eng.asp>,
http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/ACDI-CID_A.nsf/eng/NAT-11992614-JXG, and
http://www.international.gc.ca/humanitarian-humanitaire/earthquake_seisme_haiti.aspx), Haiti had become Canada's second largest recipient (after Afghanistan) of foreign assistance, with C\$ 555 million committed over five years through 2011. (The following link provides details on the Canadian assistance program in Haiti: http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/ACDI-CID_A.nsf/Eng/JUD-12912349-NLX.) Canadian aid dollars in Haiti were already feeding over

300,000 school children a day, building infrastructure, and providing emergency relief after natural disasters. Canadian aid had also helped to register more than 90 percent eligible voters and to immunize more than 620,000 children against polio and measles. More than C\$65 million dollars have gone to strengthening the operation of Haiti's parliament. Individual Canadians, NGOs, and church groups also operate clinics, orphanages, schools, and women's shelters.

5.. (U) In addition to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), a large number of federal and Quebec provincial agencies have separate programs in Haiti, including on: governance assistance from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, and the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada; policing and security from the Department of National Defence, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Correctional Services of Canada; and, food production and safety through the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Department of Agriculture. Canada continues to provide technical assistance for the establishment of a functioning taxation and customs system, and to build Haiti's export capacity in agriculture, textile and cultural products. Canada has contributed both police and troops to MINUSTAH; two RCMP officers were killed in the earthquake.

16. (U) Because of the fragile nature of the Haitian economy, Canada-Haiti business interests are relatively small, but some of the larger Canadian businesses operating there had been Gildan Activewear (textiles), Scotiabank and Desjardins Group (financial services), and Somine (mining). (No statistics are available about the value of these investments.) Remittances from Haitians in Canada to family members in Haiti estimated at C\$250 000 per year. Canada exported goods to Haiti in 2008 worth C\$ 58 million, while importing C\$ 29 million worth of goods from Haiti. Canada is currently negotiating a trade and development agreement with CARICOM (of which Haiti is a member). Canadians also had been one of the few reliable sources of tourism dollars in Haiti.

17. (U) Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon will chair a special Haiti donors' preparatory conference in Montreal on January 25 to bring together key donors and to hear from key international organizations and non-governmental organizations over the key challenges ahead for Haiti. PM Harper is expected to speak as well.

18. (U) Comment: Canada has long been a key partner on assistance to Haiti, and - in no small part due to cultural and linguistic capabilities - will remain a major player as the international community responds to the latest natural disaster and humanitarian nightmare.
JACOBSON